THE GARDEN

The garden of the Villa d'Este was essentially conceived in architectural terms, and its symbolism developed so that it could be easily deciphered by any erudite Renaissance gentleman. The garden is laid out upon a steep slope which, viewed from the building, descends to the terrace below by means of a series of ramps and pathways. Yet we should try to imagine the original viewpoint that generally was from the lower level entrance, as a person coming from Rome would usually enter the villa from a sideroad off the Via Tiburtina. From this entrance, the main axis cutting through the pools comes out at the Fountain of the Dragons which marks the start of the steeper zone and thereafter leads to the main staircase of the double loggia and right into the center of the great underlying terrace. Four transversal axes branch out of the great terrace: one called the Cardinal's Path; a second which starts out at the Oval Fountain and crosses the Hundred Fountains Path, ending at the fountain of Rome: the third, the Hydrangea Path, leading to the Fountain of the Dragons and the Fountain of the Owl; and the fourth which, from the Organ Fountain, skirting the fishponds, was supposed to end